

The 20th Century and Women: A Social History

1900 – 2000

- 1900** For the first time, women are allowed to compete in the Olympics. Margaret Aggot wins a gold medal in golf for the U.S.
- 1906** The General Federation of Women's Clubs helps wins passage of a Pure Food and Drug Act to prohibit sale of diseased meat, decomposed or seriously adulterated foods.
- 1910** Japanese *picture brides* begin arriving in the United States, necessitated by U.S. anti-miscegenation laws. 20,000 Japanese women immigrate by decade's end.
- 1912** Juliette Gordon Low founds American Girl Guides, now Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., encouraging outdoor activity, self-reliance, resourcefulness, and preparation for varied roles as adults.
- 1914** Mother's Day becomes a national holiday.
- 1917** During WWI, women fully participate in the war effort in a variety of ways—driving ambulances in Europe, volunteering in the U.S. and abroad, and working in traditional male jobs.
- 1920** Two-thirds of the states ratify the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, granting women the right to vote.
- 1928** Margaret Mead challenges the biological basis of gender differences in *Coming of Age in Samoa*, revolutionizing popular thinking.
- 1930** Women are about 44 percent of college students. At Black colleges, women are about 40 percent of the graduates, double the number of 1920.
- 1932** Amelia Earhart flies solo across the Atlantic Ocean (second only after Lindbergh).
- 1933** Eleanor Roosevelt becomes the first president's wife to hold a press conference.

- 1941-** During World War II, women make indispensable contributions as workers, volunteers, military personnel, and participants in homefront activities that included selling war bonds, rationing, and maintaining morale.
- 1943** The All-American Girls' Baseball League is founded by Chicago Cubs owner Philip Wrigley.
- 1950** The U.S. Census Bureau recognizes a married woman's right to use her birth name.
- 1955** Rosa Parks is arrested for crossing the color line on a bus, igniting the Civil Rights Movement.
- 1957** Nine Black students, six of them young women, face violent protests to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.
- 1961** Jerrie Cobb is the first of 14 women qualifying for NASA's new astronaut program.
- 1969** California adopts the nation's first "no fault" divorce law, allowing divorce by mutual consent.
- 1972** Susan Stamberg becomes the first female news anchor for network radio, for National Public Radio.
- 1974** Little League Baseball admits girls to its teams. Bunny Taylor (b. 1963) pitches the year's first no-hitter.
- 1978** For the first time in history, more women than men enter college.
- 1978-** Women's History Week debuts in Sonoma County, California. Congress declares March as National Women's History Month in 1987.
- 1979** Susan B. Anthony is the first U.S. woman to have her portrait on a coin – a silver dollar – in general circulation.
- 1980** The "gender gap" first shows up at the election polls as women report different political priorities than men.

- 1983** Women earn more than half the undergraduate degrees, about half the master's degrees, and a third of the PhDs. However, women are only 27% of full-time faculty and 11% of full professors.
- 1983-** Physicist Sally Ride, Ph.D., becomes America's first woman astronaut, spending 6 days in space as flight engineer aboard the *Challenger*.
- 1986** Jeana Yeager makes history co-piloting the first non-stop flight around the world without refueling.
- 1987** National Women's History Month is added to the federal calendar.
- 1990** Women in their 20s, calling themselves "the third wave," begin forming myriad organizations to tackle their generation's particular concerns and vulnerabilities.
- 1990-** Women earn 36 percent of all doctorates, up from 11% in 1960, and 14.3% in 1970.
- 1990-** The office of Women's Health Research is established within the National Institutes of Health to increase women's representation in all medical research.
- 1992** U.S. women win 14 gold medals during the Winter Olympics.
- 1992-** Women are allowed to fly combat aircraft, opening the way for advances in their military careers.
- 1993** The Women's Rights National Historical Park is dedicated in Seneca Falls, New York, the first women's history site in the National Park Service.

- 1995** Women enrolled in medical school at Yale, Harvard, and Johns Hopkins outnumber men for the first time.
- 1996** U.S. women star in the Summer Olympics as they win 19 gold medals, 10 silver, and 9 bronze.
- 1999** Colonel Eileen Collins, the first woman to pilot a U.S. spacecraft (1995), becomes the first woman commander of an American space flight.
- 2000** As part of an increasing number of projects throughout the U.S. to honor historical women's contributions, The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts, the City of Boston, and the Boston Women's Heritage Trail collaborated to create a walking trail honoring "Women Artists in the Back Bay."